

## Claims

### What is claimed:

1. A management station, comprising:
  - a processor;
  - memory in communication with the processor; and
  - program instructions stored in memory and executable on the processor to:
    - initiate execution of a particular device function that will use a driver;
    - select a set of drivers based upon defined device information; and
    - call a routine in a particular driver from the selected set of drivers which executes to determine whether the particular driver is most appropriate to perform the particular device function for a particular device.
2. The management station of claim 1, further including program instructions which execute to select the particular driver to perform the particular device function based upon a response from the routine.
3. The management station of claim 1, wherein the program instructions, to initiate the execution of a particular device function and select a set of drivers, are provided within management software and wherein the program instructions to determine whether the particular driver is appropriate are provided within a particular driver.
4. The management station of claim 1, wherein the program instructions to determine whether the particular driver is appropriate execute to compare a device identifier with a driver identifier.
5. The management station of claim 4, wherein the device identifier is a system descriptor string.

6. The management station of claim 4, wherein the device identifier is a feature enabled on the particular device.
7. The management station of claim 4, wherein the device identifier is a management information base on the particular device.
8. The management station of claim 4, wherein the device identifier is an identifiable bug in a set of executable instructions of the particular device.
9. A management station, comprising:
  - a processor;
  - memory in communication with the processor; and
  - a management application having program instructions stored in memory and executable on the processor to:
    - select a set of drivers based upon defined device information;
    - select a particular driver from the selected set of drivers; and
    - the particular driver having program instructions stored in memory and executable on the processor to:
      - perform analysis to determine whether the particular driver is appropriate to perform a particular device function.
10. The management station of claim 9, further including program instructions within the particular driver which execute to initiate a determination of whether the particular driver is appropriate to perform the particular device function.
11. The management station of claim 9, wherein the particular driver includes a set of extensible criteria used to determine whether the particular driver is appropriate.
12. The management station of claim 9, further including program instructions within the particular driver which execute to query a particular device for a firmware version identifier.

13. The management station of claim 9, wherein the selection of a particular driver from the selected set of drivers is based upon a release date of the particular driver.
14. The management station of claim 9, wherein the selection of a particular driver from the selected set of drivers is based upon a device feature supported by the particular driver.
15. The management station of claim 9, wherein the supported device feature is a security protocol.
16. A method of selecting a driver for a device, comprising:  
initiating execution of a particular device function that will use a driver;  
selecting a set of drivers based upon defined device information; and  
calling a routine in a particular driver from the selected set of drivers which executes to determine whether the particular driver is most appropriate to perform the particular device function for a particular device.
17. The method of claim 16, wherein the routine executes if a driver cannot be determined based on the defined device information.
18. The method of claim 16, wherein initiating the execution of a particular device function and selecting a set of drivers are provided by program instructions within network management software and wherein determining whether the particular driver is appropriate is provided by program instructions within the particular driver.
19. The method of claim 16, wherein initiating the execution of a particular device function and selecting a set of drivers are provided by program instructions within storage device management software and wherein determining whether the particular driver is appropriate is provided by program instructions within a particular driver.

20. The method of claim 16, further including searching each driver within the set of drivers to identify a particular driver that supports a particular set of device features.
21. The method of claim 16, further including organizing the set of drivers by a release date of each driver.
22. The method of claim 21, further including searching the set of drivers from newest release date to oldest release date.
23. The method of claim 16, further including comparing the set of device features against sets of device features supported by a number of available drivers within the set of drivers.
24. A method of selecting a driver for a device, comprising:
  - selecting a set of drivers based upon defined device information;
  - selecting a particular driver from the selected set of drivers; and
  - performing analysis within the particular driver to determine whether the particular driver is appropriate to perform a particular device function.
25. The method of claim 24, further including organizing the drivers within the set of drivers based on a hierarchy.
26. The method of claim 25, further including organizing the hierarchy based on a driver version identifier.
27. The method of claim 25, further including organizing the hierarchy based on a driver release date.
28. The method of claim 25, further including selecting an appropriate driver from among the hierarchy based on comparison of whether a feature of a particular device is supported by the particular driver.

29. A computer readable medium having program instructions to cause a device to perform a method, comprising:
- initiating execution of a particular device function that will use a driver;  
selecting a set of drivers based upon defined device information; and  
calling a routine in a particular driver from the selected set of drivers which executes to determine whether the particular driver is most appropriate to perform the particular device function for a particular device.
30. The computer readable medium of claim 29, further including determining which driver includes support for functions that most closely correlates to a set of device functions.
31. The computer readable medium of claim 29, further including extracting information from the particular device regarding what version of firmware the particular device is using.
32. The computer readable medium of claim 31, further including selecting the particular driver for use with the particular device based upon the device firmware version and firmware version compatibility of the particular driver.
33. A management station, comprising:
- a processor;  
memory in communication with the processor; and  
means for automatically selecting, from among a number of drivers, a driver having features which most closely correlates to a set of device features of a device.
34. The management station of claim 33, wherein at least a portion of the means for automatically selecting is delegated to program instructions within the particular driver.

35. The management station of claim 33, wherein the means for automatically selecting a driver includes program instructions within each driver which execute to narrow a list of available drivers.
36. The management station of claim 33, wherein the means for automatically selecting a driver includes program instructions within a particular driver which execute to determine whether the particular driver is appropriate for use with the device.
37. The management station of claim 36, wherein program instructions within a particular driver includes program instructions which execute to analyze the set of device features against a set of driver features to determine whether the particular driver is appropriate for use with the particular device.